

MOTION-WING DECOYS

Although several studies have shown motion-wing decoys (MWD) use results in higher success rates; at present, there are no indications that MWD use results in higher harvest rates. Even if harvest rates increase, the impact of hunting mortality must be kept in perspective relative to influences of habitat conditions and weather. Objections expressed by hunters include concerns about changes in distribution of harvest (e.g., reduction in harvest opportunity in southern states), inability to compete with others who use them, increased crippling rates, differential vulnerability of young and adult birds, and the unwanted hassle of needing more equipment. Additional objections relate to hunter ethics and fair chase, including concerns about the loss of hunting traditions, learned skills (e.g., calling, blinds, choosing hunting locations, etc.), and public perception of hunters and hunting. These are valid concerns, although difficult to measure and incorporate into decisions. A compelling argument could be made in favor of hunting experience, tradition, and learned skills instead of another hunting gadget. An equally strong case could be made for enhanced hunting success as an attraction to novice and inexperienced hunters and a way to prompt or maintain interest in hunting and support for conservation.

2006 Motion-wing decoy update: The use of Motion-wing decoys in Missouri and throughout the country continues to be a source of controversy. Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Washington prohibit their use and California and Minnesota have banned their use during a portion of their seasons. The Mississippi Flyway Council discussed the issue at their 2006 summer meeting, but did not take any action. Some states expressed interest in a flyway-wide ban, and others encouraged more formally addressing issues of hunter ethics and fair chase associated with new technologies and hunting methods.

Hunter opinions about Motion-wing decoys: MWD use in Missouri appears to have stabilized with 57-67% of hunters reporting using a MWD from 2001-2004. On Conservation Areas, 69% of the hunting trips included a MWD each year from 2002-2004 and accounted for approximately 74% of the total harvest. We first asked hunters their opinions about MWDs in a survey after the 2001 waterfowl season. Over 55% of the respondents indicated they favored the use of MWDs as long as season lengths and bag limits were not affected. We then asked if there should be special regulations on Conservation Areas. Over 60% indicated they did not want special MWD regulations on Conservation Areas. In a survey after the 2004 waterfowl season, 59% of the respondents indicated that MWDs should be allowed, and only 25% said they should either be banned statewide (16%), or on public areas (9%). These results were similar to a national duck hunter survey that found only 23% opposed MWDs.